

## **KILKIVAN & DISTRICT COMMUNITY CARE ASSN INC.**

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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Kilkivan Seniors Connected by Memory Sharing**

Fourteen Kilkivan seniors happily shared their collective memories on Wednesday when Griffith Uni students used images provided by the Queensland State Archives (QSA) to trigger recollections at a Memory Lounge event just outside Kilkivan.

This was the first time the Memory Lounge concept had been taken “on the road” beyond Brisbane, thanks to the initiative of Associate Professor Catherine Dhavernas from the Griffith School of Humanities, Languages & Social Science who provided her students with an opportunity to engage in a very practical experience instead of writing an academic paper.

The seven students – 4 of whom are studying for a Bachelor of Medical Science – greeted the seniors and provided them with morning tea before organising them into two groups and giving them printed images to prompt recollections of earlier times. The images included wood chopping at the Brisbane Ekka, Gympie Railway Station, and Mary Street in 1962.

The event was also attended by Kathryn King from QSA who joined the group discussion to gain first-hand experience of the Memory Lounge concept in action.

After the event concluded, Assoc. Professor Dhavernas conducted a de-brief session with her students. The feedback included comments about their surprise at the level of independence of the senior attendees (one noted that a 92 year old had driven himself to the session!) and how much they obviously rely on each other for support. Several of the students expressed gratitude for having an opportunity to mix with seniors from a completely different lifestyle from their own families’. One student noted that she “can now completely see why they want to stay in Kilkivan despite the lack of services!” while another observed that no amount of reading or research could equal this experience: “the learnings will stick so much better!”

President of Kilkivan & District Community Care Assn Inc., Rosie Fitzgerald thanked all for their attendance, and observed later that she was sure that both the seniors and the students had really enjoyed their interactions. “I am not aware of previous direct contact between senior Kilkivan residents and a group of uni students. I had the privilege of

listening in on the debrief session afterwards and heard so many comments from the students which indicated that they had learnt a lot about the realities of life for older residents in an area with limited services. Two noted that “they all seemed so happy!” The students were also delighted by the fact that one generous senior had brought along a bag of home-grown mangoes to share with everyone – they seemed really moved by the fact that he had also encouraged everyone to just drop into his place and pick their own!”

Ms Fitzgerald added: “I am very grateful that these students and their professor made the effort to travel to Kilkivan to support our ageing-in-place efforts in this community – one student drove from Northern NSW to attend, so that’s a significant commitment in this era of remote studying.”

One of the seniors in attendance, Dawn Choate, offered the following remarks: “The Memory Lounge had a wonderful atmosphere! So many with apparently so little in common were interacting so well. I want to mention Rosie Fitzgerald’s role in this – without her initiative and foresight, it wouldn’t have happened. She coordinated a great turnout!”

The Memory Lounge event was sponsored and facilitated by Griffith University, Queensland State Archives & Kilkivan & District Community Care Assn Inc.

Rosie Fitzgerald

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***Photo of large group leaning on railing:***

*Griffith Uni contingent, left to right: Ingrid Newman, Sophie Taylor, Tiffany Hong, Jasmin Veldhuizen, Nikki Ao, Holly Wu, Skye Van Esch, Assoc. Prof. Catherine Dhavernas, Prof. James Carson, Wylie.*